

Survey Report

Reconnaissance Survey Rural Ada County, Idaho



Prepared by

TAG Historical Research & Consulting

For

Ada County Historic Preservation Council

June 2008

Introduction:

The Ada County Historic Preservation Council (ACHPC) requested a reconnaissance level survey of selected properties located in rural Ada County to determine if any are eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

The 33 properties selected by the ACHPC are located throughout Ada County and were selected for documentation based on their potential eligibility to the Register. The current survey follows a series of efforts to record rural properties in Ada County that began in 1985.

Methodology:

The reconnaissance level survey was conducted in accordance with the standards of the *Idaho State Historic Sites Inventory Manual* and the *Idaho Historic Sites Inventory Automated Database: Manual of Instruction for Data Entry*.

Pre-field research was conducted at that State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and on the Ada County Assessor's property information database, found on (www.adacountyassessor.org/propsys/). Additional research on specific properties was conducted at the Idaho State Historical Society Public Archives and Research Library (PARL) and through oral interviews with property owners and others, including Meridian historian Lila Hill.

Fieldwork was conducted to complete the Idaho Historic Sites inventory form and to take the required photographs of each property. The reconnaissance level survey determines whether individual buildings or multiple feature farmsteads are eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. A building is eligible if it meets the following criteria:

- Is the building 50 years old?
- Has the building been unaltered over its lifetime?
- If the building has been altered, does the alteration comply with *The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*?
- Does the building (or farmstead) possess "historic integrity reflecting its character at that time?"
- Does the building independently meet the National Register criteria?
- If the building has been altered and the alterations did not comply with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, is the change easily reversible?

A building is not eligible if

- The building is less than 50 years old.
- The building has been altered and the alteration destroys the building's historic integrity. Example: An addition does not match the massing or style of the original building.

Construction dates were based on information from the Ada County Assessor's Office. Several historic maps were used to provide historic ownership information for the properties, including a 1904 map of agricultural lands in Ada County, a 1917 Ada county land ownership map, and the 1938 Metsker's atlas of Ada County, all available for use at the PARL. Current ownership data was provided by the ACHPC. During fieldwork, if an entire site could not be observed easily from the road and no one was available to grant permission for the survey team to enter the property, all photographs and observations were made outside of the property at the location with the best vantage point. Two properties provided unique obstacles—5565 S. Linder Rd a fenced property was visible from an open area on the road adjacent to the property, but the presence of several large dogs prevented the team from completing survey work. The second property, 4770 S. McDermott, located on the northeast corner of the intersection of S. McDermott Rd and W. Amity, is surrounded by a high palisade fence. The house is visible over the fence, but there appeared to be no access to the property. Photographs were taken from the south side of Amity Road.

Rural Ada County

The development of irrigation and transportation in southern Idaho led to agricultural development and over time the growth of specific industries in Ada County such as fruit culture (particularly prunes) and dairying. The small farmsteads recorded for this survey were established because of the increased availability of water through irrigation projects and the convenience of farm to market transportation provided by the building of railroad lines (including interurban or "trolley" lines).

Irrigation: To settlers moving west in the 1840s and 1850s, vast areas of Idaho were bleak, harsh expanses of landscape endured on the way to hospitable country such as the Oregon Territory. Idaho was settled late - when mining, agriculture, and irrigation made living in the West's most difficult places worthwhile.

The presence of the Oregon Trail, discovery of gold and silver in the Boise Basin, and the close of the Civil War drew settlers to the Boise Valley. They settled in the valley, assured by the 1863 establishment of military Fort Boise Reserve and its troops that quickly solved escalating territorial mining disputes and Indian unrest.

Shrewd entrepreneurs had learned from the California gold rush that it was far more profitable to supply the boomtowns than to pursue gold in its natural locations. They flocked to the Boise Valley, in business to serve that purpose. By 1865, the valley's frontier towns and outlying agricultural communities such as Star sat at early transportation and migration crossroads that eventually became major highway routes.

The presence of the now-channeled and dam-controlled Boise River belies its wandering braided configuration that once flooded and scoured the valley. Major floods recorded in the 1800s and early decades of the 1900s washed through the broad Boise Valley, scouring the wide valley floor. Earliest settlers attempted to manage Boise River water through irrigation and flood control. With the introduction of major irrigation systems, this semi-arid area on the Snake River Plain has served as an important agricultural region for the last 150 years.

The 1877 Desert Land Act and the 1894 Carey Act triggered homesteading and major investing in 'reclaiming the land' as massive pre-federal and later federal irrigation projects watered the south-western Idaho landscape, converting bleak tracts of desert into arable farmland. As early as 1863, Boise's earliest settlers were investing private capital laying canal systems in Boise River's bottomlands to water orchards and fields along the river.

The contemporary landscape is defined by historic irrigation and agricultural use. The networks are indelibly laid out, stamped into the landscape, and now being replaced or adaptively used by intensive industrial and commercial development and urban sprawl in the form of subdivision and high-density housing developments. The canals, ditches, laterals and drains are taking on new functional dimensions even as they continue to be used for their original agricultural purpose.

Transportation: While arid Idaho was initially passed through by the massive emigrant movement westward, the migration route sat largely on the land it traversed. Now-vanished branches of the Oregon Trail once bracketed the Boise River channel. While early maps plot linear trail alignments stretching across the project, actual trail use on the landscape comprised countless branches including areas used for camping and pasturing.

In spite of heavily traveled stage and freight wagon routes bringing distant business, travelers, and new residents to the Boise Valley, it was not until 1887 that "The Stub," an OSL spur from Nampa made rail freighting more accessible. Its limited freight service spurred area growth by cost-effectively freighting in shipments of steel, iron, and glass, while valley lumber and agricultural products were exported to markets along the rail line.

The historic single-track OSL/UPRR alignment continues to provide freight service in the valley. Historic irrigation district and Boise Project maps from the turn-of-the-century plot its course and discuss culvert and piping construction periodically required to channel drain and lateral flows under the alignment. Longtime local roads, such as McDermott, Star, and Black 'Kat' were laid down prior to and after 1887 alignment construction. These straight-line features across the project are transportation contemporaries in the land's use history.

In the past two decades, residential development is rapidly encroaching on and transforming the heart of this traditionally rural landscape.¹

Survey Results

The properties surveyed date from c. 1887 – c. 1920, the result of the selection process developed by the Ada County Historic Preservation Council (ACHPC) during the initial planning stages. The ACHPC developed a query of the Ada County Assessor's property database to identify properties listing an existing building/structure built before 1960. This list was then narrowed by date, with the ACHPC limiting the selection to properties with an existing structure built before 1920. The final list of 33 properties was determined following drive by evaluations. TAG was given the list of 33 selected properties to document. One of the properties, IHSI# 01-1036 (5933 Branstetter), has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Tourtellotte and Hummel in Idaho multiple property listing. The house, known as the Pierce-Borah House, was moved to its current location off Chinden

Blvd. from Boise in 1959. Of the remaining 32 properties, six were previously recorded—four in the course of the 1989 and 1999 Ada County Rural Property surveys and two for Section 106 compliance projects in 2004. The previously recorded properties are identified by their Idaho Historic Sites Inventory Number (IHSI#) in this report and on the new database forms.²

With the exception of the Pierce-Borah House and Orchard School, the majority of the properties recorded for the survey were originally small farmsteads and still have numerous outbuildings, although none retain their historic integrity as farmsteads.

Architectural Styles³

The Pierce-Borah house (01-1036) is the only architect-designed building identified in the current survey. The remaining properties are vernacular, built from building plans and illustrate several architectural styles popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of the houses and farm buildings recorded in the current project have been altered over time, but a few still retain some of their original characteristics. Examples have been selected from among both the eligible and ineligible properties.

The earliest houses, constructed c. 1885 – c. 1900, were influenced by the Queen Anne style, popular in the United States from 1880 until 1910. Queen Anne houses feature steeply pitched roofs, often with a dominant front gable, cutaway bay windows, and decorative shingles and wrap-around porches. The Pierce-Borah house (01-1036), designed by architect John Tourtellotte in 1897 is an elaborate example of the Queen Anne style. Two other more modest examples of Queen Anne influenced houses are Field No. MERN3080 (3080 N. Meridian Rd.) and LOCS8940 (8940 S. Locust Grove), which has been extensively altered.

The American foursquare was a common house plan constructed between 1900 and 1920. Foursquare houses were two stories, four rooms on each floor, were usually built with a hipped roof, and sometimes featured full or partial-width porches. 01-19746 (5220 W. Ustick) and SENW10050 (10050 W. Seneca) are examples of the American four-square.

The Colonial Revival style was popular in the United States from 1880-1955. Colonial Revival houses are characterized by a front entry accented with a pedimented crown and pilasters or an entry porch supported by columns. Sidelights and fanlights are often additional features of the entry, and the façade is generally symmetrical with a centered door between paired windows. TENS6020 (6020 S. Ten Mile) is an example of a Colonial Revival house, although the style details may have been added when the house was altered in 1970.

Craftsman/Bungalow houses gained widespread popularity in the United States from 1910s-1920s through publications such as *Craftsman* magazine, published in the early years of the century by designer Gustav Stickley. Plans could be found in mainstream publications as well, such as *Ladies Homes Journal*, or kit homes could be purchased through mail order companies such as Sears. 01-12569 (8358 W. State St.) and 01-19820 (5220 S. Ten Mile) are both examples of the Craftsman/Bungalow style. 01-19820 was identified by the owner as a

kit house, having been delivered by rail to Kuna and then hauled over to the site on S. Ten Mile Rd.⁴

Agricultural Buildings and Structures

Most of the properties recorded in this survey were originally small farmsteads. It was expected that the survey would document barns, silos, dairy parlors, granaries, loafing sheds and other miscellaneous outbuildings. The results were not what was expected. Although a few older farm buildings remained, most had been replaced by modern metal buildings, removed, or left to deteriorate and fall down. No eligible farm buildings were documented, with the exception of the garage/Quonset-type building located at OVEW 1690 (1690 W. Overland Rd.) and the farmstead ROEN6036. This Quonset building remains in excellent condition and is used as a garage/storage building by the property owner, who indicated that it was one of the first Quonset-type building installed on a farm in Ada County. Quonset is the name of the Rhode Island community where all-steel kits were created to provide various types of buildings for the United States military during World War II. The convenience of the kit type and the structural sturdiness of these buildings led to the creation of a market for steel kit buildings for other uses after World War II. At the Roe Street farmstead, the house, constructed in 1918, has been extensively altered, but the remaining farm buildings are typical of the small dairy operations that thrived in Ada County from the 1910s until after World War II.⁵

Eligible Properties

Five properties have been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). A list with a brief description is given below, photographs of the properties follow the acknowledgements at the end of the report.

IHSI#01-12569—(8358 W. State Street)

This small farmstead includes two buildings that are eligible to the NRHP. The house (ISHI 01-12569), a two story Craftsman/Bungalow built c. 1915 which retains many of the original elements including decorative knee braces and bargeboards. The only unaltered farm building on the site, the chicken coop (01-12571) is a half-monitor coop built with Craftsman elements such as exposed rafter tips. The property was owned by early property developers David Heron and John Gary in 1905, by 1917, it had been included in Stein's Subdivision.

IHSI#01-19820—(5220 S. Ten Mile Rd)

The Craftsman/Bungalow house on this small farmstead retains almost all of its original details, including the dirt basement below. According to the current owner, the house is a "kit house," ordered from a mail order company such as Sears, Roebuck & Co., delivered by rail to Kuna and then hauled by wagon to S. Ten Mile Rd. In 1917, this property belonged to D. Hubbard.

IHSI#01-20042—(13200 Monroe Ave.)—Orchard School

The community of Orchard was originally a stop on the Oregon Short Line known as Bisuka. When the prune industry in Ada County began to boom, a large prune orchard was planted near the community, which then became known as Orchard. Enough people arrived to support the construction of a school to house students in grades 1-8. The prune industry had died out by the 1940s, but the railroad continued to run some operations from Orchard. Although the school was downsized in 1950 when it was converted to an elementary school (grades 1-6), it operated for another 16 years, finally closing when the railroad pulled out. The school building is one of the few remaining structures in the old Orchard Community. Although it has been in use as a residence for several years, it remains almost completely unaltered.

Field No. MERN3080 (3080 N. Meridian Rd.) The Onwiler House

According to Meridian historian Lila Hill, this was the farm of William and Eliza Onwiler (spelled Onweiler) who homesteaded here c. 1883 and built the house c. 1887. The couple was active in the community and donated land for the Sabbath Home Methodist Episcopal Church near the corner of Ustick and Meridian Roads. Mr. Onwiler died in 1895 and Mrs. Onwiler managed the ranch on her own raising alfalfa, wheat, oats, barley, cattle, horses and hogs. She died in 1918.

The Onwiler house is one of the few remaining nineteenth century rural buildings in Ada County. Although it has been altered with the modification of the porch, it is eligible to the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with the early settlement of Ada County.

Field No. OVEW1790 (1600 W Overland Rd) Quonset type Farm Building

This small farmstead has retained none of its historic integrity with the exception of the c. 1946 Quonset type building now used as a garage/storage building.

This building remains in excellent condition. The property owner indicated that it was one of the first Quonset-type buildings installed on a farm in Ada County. Quonset is the name of the Rhode Island community where all-steel kits were created to provide various types of buildings for the United States military during World War II. The convenience of the kit type and the structural sturdiness of these buildings led to the creation of a market for steel kit buildings for other uses after World War II.

Field No. ROE6036 (6036 N. Roe St.)

The 1918 house on this property has been extensively altered and is not eligible to the NRHP, but the dairy parlor and the milk parlor are generally unchanged. This small farmstead is typical of the dairy farms found throughout Ada County until farm consolidation and increasing urbanization brought the small dairy business to a halt in the 1950s.

Recommendations

Several recommendations made in 2001 as part of *Patterns of the Past: the Ada County Historic Site Inventory* retain their importance and relate directly to the current survey:

1. Follow up on research to document early settlements that have disappeared, such as McDermott, Orchard, Pleasant Valley and Mora. More information is also needed on early platted subdivisions such as Avalon and Kuna Orchard Tracts and Star Orchards. These settlements and subdivisions can help explain the beginnings of the urban-rural dynamic still ongoing in Ada County.
2. More information is needed on Ada County's dairy and poultry industries and the important roles they played in the area's economy.
3. Much of the reality of farming technology and construction is not available in the written records. Taped oral history interviews should be considered with several long-time farmers and members of their families.

We would add the following suggestions to this list:

4. Future surveys should concentrate on documenting farms of the mid-20th century, all of which are as threatened by the urbanization of the county as those from earlier eras. Oral history interviews with people such as Elmo Shields Powell (OVEW1690) and Russell and Ruby Johnson (CANS16228), farmers who came in to the area after World War II, are long overdue.
5. A review of the sites documented in Ada County over the past twenty-five years shows that many of those considered most significant have already been lost to the rapid changes or are currently threatened by the construction of roads, subdivisions and shopping centers. Before too many more of these sites disappear, a few should be selected for intensive level survey and documentation.
6. Two important themes underlying the development of Ada County—irrigation and transportation—could serve as the springboard for an interpretive, exhibit, public presentation or driving tour. As Ada County continues to grow and rural areas dwindle any or all of these ideas could help both long time and new residents develop a sense of place and a better understanding of the history of the county.

¹ *Patterns of the Past: The Ada County Historic Site Inventory* (Boise: Ada County Development Services, 2001.); Pam Demo, history section, draft ASHR report, *Idaho 16, Idaho 44 to Interstate 84*, on file at TAG Historical Research & Consulting.

² Personal communication, Leslie Toombs, Ada County Development Services to Elizabeth Jacox, June 25, 2008.

³ Information about architectural styles is from Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1988).

⁴ Conversation with Mrs. John Thompson, June 18, 2008.

⁵ Conversation with Elmo Shields, June 18, 2008. Information about Quonset buildings found at "Schoen burg Farm: 1941 Quonset-type Structure," (http://www.ci.westminster.co.us/articles/Quonset_text.pdfm), accessed June 2008.

NOTE:

Digital images submitted with this report were printed by Media Specialties, Boise, Idaho, on Noritsu bDP-421 Printer (Epson tech-rated), using Noritsu Kokai Co. Ltd. archival pigmented inks and Noritsu Photographic Paper. This printer, ink and paper meet the photographic standards of the Secretary of the Interior.

Sources

Ada County Assessor's Office, Land Records/GIS, <http://www.adacountyassessor.org>, accessed April – June 2008.

Hill, Lila and Glen W Davidson. *They Came to Build a Community: A History of Meridian, Idaho, and the People Called Methodists*. Meridian: First United Methodist Church, 1986.

Idaho State Historical Society, Public Archives and Research Library
Map Collection

Maps of Agricultural Lands of Ada County, 1904

Ada County Land Ownership (Boise Intermountain Map Co., 1917)

Metkser's Ada County Atlas, 1938

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1988.

Patterns of the Past: The Ada County Historic Site Inventory. Boise: Ada County Development Services, 2002.

2006 Preservation Plan for Cultural and Historic Resources. Ada County Historic Preservation Council, Public Review Draft, October 2006.

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Photographs

Eligible Properties

Eligible Properties



IHSI #01-12569
8358 W. State Street, #24 on Inventory Map
View to NW



IHSI# 01-12571
8358 W. State Street
View to NE

Eligible Properties



IHSI# 01-19820
5220 S. Ten Mile Rd., #8 on Inventory Map
Above: view to NE
Below: view to E



Eligible Properties



IHSI#01-20042
13200 Monroe Ave., #1 on Inventory Map
Above: View to N
Below: View to NE



Eligible Properties



Field No. MERN3080
3080 N. Meridian Rd., #33 on Inventory Map
View to NE



Field No. OVEW1690
1690 W Overland Rd., #3 on inventory map
View to NE

Eligible Properties



Field No ROEN6036
6036 N. Roe Street, #25 on Inventory Map
Dairy parlor, loafing shed and milk house, view to NE

Inventory List

SITE/FIELD NO.	Inventory Map #	PARCEL#	ADDRESS	BUILT	STYLE	NR Eligibility
01-1036	26	S0526120995	5933 N. Branstetter	1897	Queen Anne	Not eligible
01-12058-12062	13	S1402142150	6767 S. Maple Grove Rd.	1905	No Style	Not eligible
01-12569-12574	24	R8123250940	8358 W. State St.	1910	Craftsman/Bungalow	Eligible
01-18113	23	S0433438850	6220 Roe St.	1918	No Style	Not eligible
01-19746	32	R6635750410	5220 W. Ustick Rd.	1900	Other	Not eligible
01-19820	8	R3035680100	5220 S. Ten Mile Rd.	1920	Craftsman/Bungalow	Eligible
01-20042	1	S1233212701	13200 E. Monroe Ave.	1900	No Style	Not eligible
AMIE4085	12	S0332430000	4085 E. Amity Rd.	1915	No Style	Not eligible
AMIW6381	7	R7977100015	6381 W. Amity Rd.	1915	No Style	Not eligible
BEAW10390	31	S0627417320	10390 W. Beacon Light Rd.	1901	No Style	Not eligible
BLAS1505	4	S0234110042	1505 S. Black Cat Rd.	1910	No Style	Not eligible
BOGN4005	27	S0419336205	4005 Bogus Basin Rd.	1905	No Style	Not eligible
BRON4401	20	S2307336500	5501 Brookside Lane	1900	No Style	Not eligible
CANN6670	21	S2318120000	6670 N. Can Ada Rd.	1915	No Style	Not eligible
CANS16228	29	S0426212600	16628 S. Canada Rd.	1917	Craftsman/Bungalow	Not eligible
CANS16804	30	S1403233600	16804 S. Canada Rd.	1917	Craftsman/Bungalow	Not eligible
CHIW2685	22	R5654360100	2685 W. Chinden	1887	No Style	Not eligible
CLOS6828	14	R1096330200	6828 S. Cloverdale Rd.	1910	No Style	Not eligible
EAGS1600	19	R7334123580	1600 S. Eagle Rd.	1912	No Style	Not eligible
FAIE4612	15	R1060700100	4612 E. Faith Ln.	1910	No Style	Not eligible
HENW4473	28	R6934730060	4473 S. Henry St.	1910	No Style	Not eligible
KINE3878	18	S1408325400	3878 E. King Rd.,	1918	No Style	Not eligible
LINS5565	9	S1209325410	5565 S. Linder Rd.	1902	No Style	*Not evaluated
LOCS8940	16	S1228336310	8940 S. Locust Grove Rd.	1900	No Style	Not eligible
MCDN776	2	R8123250150	776 N. McDermott Rd.	1905	No Style	Not eligible
MCD54770	6	S1126244306	4770 S. McDermott Rd.	1910	No Style	*Not evaluated
MERN3080	33	S1416141400	3080 N. Meridian Rd.	1887	Queen Anne	Eligible
OVEW1690	3	S1235336450	1690 W. Overland Rd.	1913	No Style	Eligible
ROEN6036	25	S1223336400	6036 N. Roe St.	1918	No Style	Eligible
SENV10050	11	R8123251110	10050 W. Seneca Dr.	1908	Other	Not eligible
STEN2060	17	S1235233600	2060 N. Stewart Rd.	1918	Craftsman/Bungalow	Not eligible
TENS6020	10	S1106222634	6020 S. Ten Mile Rd.	1900	Colonial Revival	Not eligible
VICW3030	5	S1214449105	3030 W. Victory Rd.	1910	No Style	Not eligible

*unable to obtain photographs or record site details